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**FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONALISM -- A
QUICK FIX**

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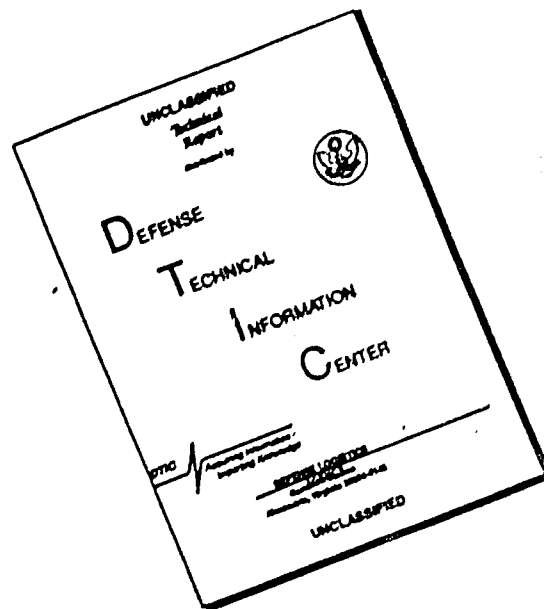
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STUDENT ESSAY

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FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONALISM . . . A QUICK FIX

BY

COLONEL GEORGE B. BARTEL

INFANTRY

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FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONALISM . . . A QUICK FIX .

by

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23 October 1972

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It is axiomatic that a quality all volunteer Army must consist of troop units commanded and staffed by officers expert in their business, i.e., professionals. This essay inquires whether officers, during their mid-career years, spend enough time with troops to become fully qualified. The study sample consists of a group of Infantry officers considered for promotion to colonel in 1971. Analysis of their last fourteen assignments shows, on the average, they spent 25% of the time with troops in assignments lasting 10.5 months each. This is not considered enough. Although the Officer Personnel Management System seeks improved officer professionalism through more concentrated assignment patterns, its relatively long range measures fail to provide the immediate impact needed during this year's drive to achieve an all volunteer Army. It is concluded that modified assignment policy is the key to rapid amelioration of professionalism problems. The recommendation is made to change assignment stabilization policy no. 1, to give highest priority to troop duty.

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FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONALISM . . . A QUICK FIX

BACKGROUND

. . . we have relearned two lessons from our Vietnam experience. We have learned again that discipline, morale, and unit esprit deteriorate in a system which permits constant rotation of personnel, and that the professional officer or NCO is a product of a lifetime of study and experience.¹

These are the words of still another Army officer writing on Army problems in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. During an unparalleled wave of introspection the Army has been, for the past few years, trying to rebuild its essence as well as its image. For rebuild it must, in order to attract and retain high quality youth. The urgency of the requirement is emphasized by the President's objective to achieve all volunteer military forces by July 1973. This essay, like other recent studies, attempts to explain one of the causes of the decline of Army professionalism; it recommends a relatively quick remedy as well.

The task of improving the Army clearly has resolved itself into one of improving professionalism. Initially there was a good bit of emphasis (perhaps over emphasis) on correcting the aspects of Army life that irritate soldiers. Thus, after the Modern Volunteer Army Program (MVA) was launched in 1970, many

¹John D. Bruen, LTC, "Repercussions from the Vietnam Mobilization Decision," Parameters, (Spring-Summer 1972), p. 36.

people thought of it as being synonymous with GO GO Girls, beer in the barracks, cessation of Reveille, and a smooth man telling a TV audience "The Army Wants to Join You." But, from its inception, the main thrust of MVA was on improving professionalism.

The objective of this Army Program is to expedite the development of a capably led, highly competent fighting force which attracts motivated, qualified volunteers.²

Two categories of action were specified to generate improvement:

- A. Strengthening Professionalism--To Build Positive Incentives to Service
- B. Improving Army Life--To Reduce the Sources of Dissatisfaction

Actions in the first--and crucial--category are directed toward improving professional competence and building among Army men and women of all ranks a strong sense of accomplishment and achievement in performing an important job well. These are the real attractions of soldiering, and the source of motivation and pride which sustain a fine Army.³

Reports of analysis of MVA actions consistently point up the overriding importance of professionalism. In a study contracted by the Army, the Systems Development Corporation states, "Actions in the Professionalism class are generally higher in retention impact than those in the Army Life class."⁴ Elsewhere in the

²US Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, The Modern Volunteer Army - A Program for Professionals (1971), p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 5.

⁴System Development Corporation, Analysis of MVA/VOLAP Actions Impact on Soldiers' Attitudes Toward the Army and on Retention (15 September 1972), p. 1-23.

report, the recommendation is made that:

Overall emphasis should be placed upon actions that support professionalism; emphasis in the Army Life area should in most areas be placed upon implementing no or low cost actions.⁵

Since it is assumed Army professionalism depends on leaders, it follows that strengthening the professionalism of the officer corps should be a high priority task. Former Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, accorded it just such priority. In a significant initiative, he inaugurated the new Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) which is designed to "decrease 'ticket punching' by providing multiple pathways to success."⁶ This new system grew, at least in part, out of the realization that officers were jumping around from job to job hurriedly trying to learn everything. In 1969, Colonel Walt Ulmer summed it up in a generalization-specialization study:

The present officer assignment policies, which have the appealing attribute of great reliance on individual initiative and creation of the generalist, also contribute to frequent changes of duty . . . The current system does not adequately insure that the officer skills which are essential to perform the day-to-day tasks are available.⁷

⁵System Development Corporation, p. 1-26.

⁶US Department of the Army, Department of the Army Message 240800Z Apr 72: The Officer Personnel Management System (April 1972), p. 1. (hereafter referred to as "OPMS Message").

⁷Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., ITC, Concepts of Generalization and Specialization in Officer Career Management Thesis (Carlisle Barracks, 3 March 1969), pp. 58-59.

By adopting OPMS Army personnel managers admitted past emphasis on generalization was overdone; that officers did not spend long enough in any one job to become fully qualified. Sadly, the jobs where this lack of professionalism had the most damaging impact were those with troops.

The MVA Program recognized part of this problem by establishing a sub-objective of "increasing the stability of command assignments."⁸ It was stated that, "to exercise effective leadership, commanders must attain a thorough familiarity with their jobs and their men."⁹ Action was taken early to accomplish this particular stabilization objective. In October 1970, brigade and battalion commanders were ordered stabilized for 18 months minimum; and in March 1971, company commanders for 12 months.¹⁰

Any policy designed to keep commanders in place longer ranks close behind motherhood in general popularity. But what about other officers serving with troops? Are the commanders the only ones who need to be stabilized? What about the XO's, staff officers, and platoon leaders? And what about the experience of these brigade and battalion commanders we are locking in for 18 months or more. Have they had a background of troop duty during their development years adequate to prepare them for

⁸The Modern Volunteer Army, p. 23.

⁹Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰Interview with R. Salvador, LTC, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, US Army, Washington, 27 September 1972.

their job? In other words, are Army officers getting enough troop duty? To answer the question requires analysis of the careers of a sample group to determine if officers spend enough time with troops prior to and while commanding to attain a thorough familiarity with their jobs and their men.

INFANTRY OFFICER TROOP DUTY

For the purpose of this analysis, troop duty is defined as any assignment at division or comparable level and below. The sample selected for examination is part of the group considered for promotion to Colonel by the 1971 Promotion Board.¹¹ Sample size was limited by considering only the careers of Infantry officers. The components of the sample are identified on machine prints in Annex A as follows:

Secondary Zone Selects	Gp 5 Nos. 1-15
Primary Zone Selects	Gp 1 Nos. 1-110
Primary Zone Non-selects	Gp 2 Nos. 1-263 12

Information was obtained from the Officers Master File (OMF) including assignment history (PACH--Previous Assignment Area) covering the 14 most recent assignments. The data element PACH displays dates, total months service, organization, location

¹¹US Department of the Army, Circular No. 624-15: Promotions-Recommended lists for Temporary Promotions to Colonel, Army, Chaplain, Women's Army Corps, and Army Medical Department (8 December 1971).

¹²US Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Selection Board Actions Report: DCSPER 34 (1 September 1971).

and job description.¹³ To protect the identity of members of the sample, the ONF was queried through the Inquiry Report Generator System (IRGS) using Social Security Numbers rather than names.¹⁴ Assignment data were compiled by annotating troop assignments on the machine print then adding and comparing the number of assignments with troops, total months with troops, and total months service of each officer. In some instances data did not print properly or was obviously garbled. As a result, the groups are only approximately 90% complete as reported in the DCSPER 34.

The results of the analysis follow:

Average troop duty compared to total months

Secondary Zone Selects	39 of 128 - 30%
Primary Zone Selects	42 of 140 - 30%
Primary Zone Non-Selects	30 of 173 - 17%
Overall	37 of 147 - 25%

The assignment history of the sample spans, on the average, the 10th to 21st years of service when the officers served as captain, major, and lieutenant colonel. We can see that during this mid-career period Infantry officers are serving about one-fourth of the time with troops. The best of the group, those selected for promotion to colonel, served just 30% of the time with soldiers. That does not seem long enough even to stay

¹³US Department of the Army, US Army Personnel Information Systems Command, Users Information Manual - ONF (1 August 1970).

¹⁴US Department of the Army, US Army Personnel Information Systems Command, IRGS Users Manual (17 November 1971).

current on the jargon of young soldiers, let alone tactics, weapons, communications, maintenance, administration, et al.

To determine duration or stability of troop assignments, the total of troop duty months of each group was divided by the total number of separate troop assignments.

Average duration of troop duty assignments

Secondary Zone Selects	9.5 months
Primary Zone Selects	11. months
Primary Zone Non-selects	11. months
Overall	10.5 months

This illustrates that, on the average, Infantry officers stay in one troop job less than the time required to complete one annual division training cycle. In this environment, for example, a major can be assigned as S-3 when his mechanized Infantry battalion is engaged in squad level training. He remains with the battalion through successive stages of training; then when the unit moves out for its final combined arms test, he moves out to Corps Headquarters, DA, graduate school, or what have you.

The five examples from Group 1 on Page 8 show how troop assignment time compares, typically, with other types of duty. In addition to showing relatively short, infrequent tours with troops, these examples illustrate another aspect of the problem--lack of continuity of troop experience. Only one of the five officers had troop experience within four years of assumption of battalion command; none of them had recent experience below division level.

Officer No.	Year	Job	Duration (Months)
50	1955	Co CO US	5
	1956	Recr. Off US	3
	1956	Aide US	25
	1958	Instr JWTC US	8
	1959	Co CO US	15
	1960	ROTC	52
	1964	Advisor MACV	28
	1967	Bn CO Germany	24
51	1956	ROTC	41
	1959	Instr Benning	61
	1964	Bde S-3 Germany	22
	1966	Armor Ctr Knox	18
	1967	Div Hq Vietnam	4
	1968	Bn CO Vietnam	10
	1969	DA	36
94	1956	Aide USMA	35
	1959	Staff Benning	38
	1962	Instr USMA	61
	1967	Hq USARV	5
	1968	Bn CO Vietnam	7
	1968	OSD	17
	1970	Fac AWC	28
105	1961	Co CO Germany	12
	1962	Gp Adj Germany	8
	1963	Gp Asst XO Germany	13
	1964	CONARC Hq	23
	1966	Advisor MACV	14
	1967	OPC	34
	1970	Bn CO Korea	6
	1971	Div C-1 Korea	4
107	1954	Co XO US	15
	1955	Bn S-2 US	12
	1956	Instr Benning	31
	1959	ROTC	66
	1964	Advisor MACV	19
	1966	DA	37
	1970	Bn CO US	9

CAREER MANAGEMENT

To understand why these Infantry officers spent so little time with troops, we must review the policies which guided their career planning. The assignment history of the group spans the Intermediate Professional Development Period (9-15 years) and part of the Advanced Contribution and Development Period (16-23 years) as described in Department of the Army career planning guidance. According to this guidance, Infantry career objectives include troop staff and command duty at battalion, brigade, and division level. However, the following additional objectives are also listed:

- Service school instructor duty
- Civilian component duty
- Duty with NAAGs and Missions
- Attendance at SSC, CGSC or AFSC for selected officers

That is a tall order. Colonel Ulmer points out that even if an officer moves every 17 months he cannot achieve all the objectives listed.¹⁵ In addition, during this period many officers study to complete advanced degrees and serve in DA and higher level staff positions. Since all of the above assignments--except troop duty--usually involve stabilized tours of one to three years, it should not be surprising to

¹⁵US Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 600-3: Career Planning for Army Commissioned Officers (1 August 1970), p. 7-28.

¹⁶Ulmer, p. 31.

discover troop duty being short-changed. In fact, one section of DA Pamphlet 600-3 seems to discourage troop duty with the words:

The frequency of recurrent assignment to troop duty varies depending on individual branch requirements and ordinarily will decrease with length of service.¹⁷

Therefore, it appears the Army places the importance of troop duty during mid-career behind duty with high level staff, MAAGs, Missions, Service schools, and Civilian components.

There are outside pressures to reduce even further the amount of time available for service with troops--in the name of improving professionalism. For example, writing on Army professionalism in Foreign Affairs, Robert Ginsburgh would develop greater all-around military expertise by increasing mobility among the services. He advocates development of expertise which transcends that of the individual service.¹⁸ In his book, The Professional Soldier, Morris Janowitz points out the persistent propensity of high ranking military leaders for staff work.¹⁹ This is not surprising; it is natural for ambitious officers to move toward possible benefactors--the generals. How else can one be near a general if not by serving on his staff? And few will fault an officer for carefully

¹⁷DA Pamphlet 600-3, p.2-2.

¹⁸Robert N. Ginsburgh, "The Challenge to Military Professionalism," Foreign Affairs, (January 1964), p. 255.

¹⁹Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier (1960), p. 166.

managing his own career in this way. In fact, in a Department of Defense "Bible" we read:

It is the inherent right of every officer to request such service as he believes will further his advancement, and far from discouraging the ambitious man, higher authority will invariably try to favor him.²⁰

To establish troop career fields would appear to be a logical sub-goal of the CPSC. When one considers the scope of personnel administration, intelligence and security, training, operations, supply, maintenance, and installation management at division level and below; it is not hard to visualize an officer profitably spending 20 years learning and doing jobs at those levels. Staff and command duty at "low" level is demanding and complex. Organizing, managing, and getting productive work out of soldiers is just about the hardest job going and requires a lot of practice. Colonel Ulmer found in his survey of Army War College students in 1969, that nearly 70% of the respondents believe the typical officer should spend at least 24-36 months with troops as a major and lieutenant colonel in order to gain minimum proficiency; nearly one-quarter believe that more than 36 months is required.²¹

²⁰US Department of Defense, Office of Armed Forces Information and Education, Department of Defense Pamphlet No. 1-20: The Armed Forces Officer (29 December 1960), p. 36.

²¹Ulmer, p. 81.

It seems many are aware of the problem, but not too many are getting themselves assigned to more troop duty. This is understandable. It is hard to find anybody who favors ticket punching, but so far there has been no feasible way an Army officer can increase his duty time at division or below without risking damage to his career opportunities. This indicates too much stress has been placed on officer career management as an end in itself, instead of stressing Army management. Even the CPMS "concept represents the Army's reaction to changing attitudes and goals among young or career officers . . ."²² It does not seem to address any of the attitudes and goals of the troops.

It is doubtful whether CPMS can provide early improvement of troop unit leadership and management. CPMS calls for "increas(ing) professional competence of the officer corps through greater regard for concentrated assignment patterns,"²³ and it is theoretically possible to establish troop duty as a career field for officers. But it may well prove impractical. Plain inertia will make it difficult to change officer career patterns. Surely it is naive to expect abrupt change to policies which call for a future colonel or general to have varied experience outside of troop duty. The officers responsible for policy

²²CPMS Message, p. 1.

²³Ibid.

design it, at least to some degree, on the basis of their own experience--which has been varied. However, by changing stabilization policies, maybe we can have our cake and eat it, too.

STABILIZATION

Among the drafters of personnel policy in the Pentagon, the idea of stabilizing the Army has become synonymous with improving it. The lock-in of company, battalion, and brigade commanders is a move well calculated to improve professionalism. It is well known that a command change often bends a company or battalion right out of shape--even when there is no diminution in ability of the new leader.

However, bending occurs also after movement of other officers with troops. Rapid turnover in a Brigade S-3 section has a disruptive effect on four to six battalions. Frequent change of officer supervisors in the Division AG section has the same impact on the whole division. Does anyone know a 1971 Infantry colonel or lieutenant colonel (P) who served as a division, brigade, or battalion staff officer through two consecutive training cycles? They are very scarce. It does not take much imagination to visualize the improvement in unit proficiency (and morale, and esprit) resulting if all the officers in divisions were held in their jobs for two years.

Except for the commanders mentioned earlier, Army policy on officer stabilization does not extend to troop units. One regulation reads:

Stabilization of personnel is necessary for certain units, agencies, and activities when normal COMUS tour lengths do not provide essential continuity. Examples are units that support the highest level of the Government and those that present the Army image to the public.²⁴

All of the following officer assignments are stabilized for 36 months:

Offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Combined, Joint, Unified, or Allied Headquarters and Task Forces
Offices of the Army Staff
Staff and Faculty of Service Schools (field grade)
Headquarters of: ANM, CDC, INTC, STRATCOM, NTMTS, ASA, CGNARC, ARADCOM, CONUS Armies, etc.²⁵

Why should stabilization at schools, MAAG-Missions, and high level staffs have higher priority than troop duty? If we stabilized officers only at places where discipline, drugs, race, morale, and readiness problems are most prevalent, it is not likely West Point, Fort Benning, Addis Abbaba, and the Pentagon would rank very high on the priority list.

Of course, it is comforting to have good officers locked in for extended periods as the Assistant to the Deputy Assistant

²⁴US Department of the Army, Army Regulations No. 614-5: Assignments, Details, and Transfers - Stabilization (21 August 1969), p. 1-1.

²⁵Ibid., p. A-1.

in GSD, Assistant Professor of Mathematics at West Point, or Author-Instructor in charge of Army Group in the Petrograde at Leavenworth. We have convinced ourselves it is at these places where Army prestige will be most severely tested.

But, from whose viewpoint is prestige most important today? I suggest that teaching each other, young career officers, and embryo career officers at service schools; serving civilian secretariate, congress and generals at the Pentagon and other high level staffs; and advising foreign armies are not duties of overriding importance right now. However, it is most important that we start doing a better job of leading and managing our own soldiers. There is a single statistic which, perhaps better than any other, tells how sorry a job we are doing in this--the Army first term reenlistment rate. As of May 1972, we are only retaining 9.4% of those eligible to reenlist. This is down from 18.5% in 1971 and 28% in 1968.²⁶ Surely Army retention would be better than that if soldiers perceived for themselves satisfying service in professional organizations staffed by officers who know, as a direct result of years of experience, exactly what they are doing!

Would it not be feasible to steal time from assignments now stabilized in order to provide officers more time for troop duty? Let us hypothesize using the five officers previously

²⁶ US Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Strength of the Army: DCSPER 46, (U) Part II, Gains and Losses to the Active Army (31 May 1972), p. 29

examined. In the display on Page 17, the assignments in the theoretical column are changed to optimize troop experience. This was done for all except Officer No. 96, who could be an example of one who is selected for other than troop duty. The theoretical assignment patterns do not in all cases differ from the actuals; they provide, however, the kind of troop duty stabilization officers need to attain a thorough familiarity with their jobs and their men. In addition, the revised patterns enable the soldiers to become thoroughly familiar with their leaders and supervisors!

Officer No.	Actual		Theoretical	
	Job - Assignments	Months	Job - Assignments	Months
50	Co CC US	5	Co CC US	24
	Reer Off US	3	In Asst S-2 US	12
	Aide US	25	Div Asst G-3 US	24
	Instr JATC US	8	PTC US	24
	Co CC US	15	Idc S-3 US	18
	PTC	52	In XO US	11
	Advisor MACV	28	Advisor MACV	19
	Bn CC Germany	24	In CC Germany	24
	Total	160	Total	160
51	ROTC	41	ROTC	24
	Instr Penning	61	Co CC US	30
	Idc S-3 Germany	22	Instr Penning	24
	Armor Ctr Knox	18	Bn XO Germany	18
	Div Hq Vietnam	4	Idc S-3 Germany	11
	Bn CC Vietnam	10	Asst Div G-1 US	30
			In CC Vietnam	12
	DA	36	DA	36
	Total	192	Total	192
94	Aide USMA	35	Aide USMA	35
	Staff Penning	38	Staff Penning	38
	Instr USMA	61	Instr USMA	61
	Hq MACV	5	Hq MACV	12
	Bn CC Vietnam	7		
	OSD	17	OSD	17
	Fac AMC	28	Fac AMC	28
	Total	191	Total	191
105	Co CC Germany	12	Co CC Germany	21
	Cn Adj Germany	8	Cn Adj Germany	12
	Cn Asst XO Germany	13		
	CO ARC Hq	23	CO ARC Hq	23
	Advisor MACV	14	Advisor MACV	14
	CPC	34	Bn XO US	12
	Bn CO Korea	6	CPC	22
	Div G-1 Korea	4	Bn CO Korea	10
	Total	114	Total	114
107	Co XO US	15	Co XO US	22
	Bn S-2 US	12	Bn S-2 US	12
	Instr Penning	31	Instr Penning	24
			Co CC US	24
	ROTC	66	ROTC	24
	Advisor MACV	19	Advisor MACV	12
			Bn XO US	12
			Div Asst G-4 US	12
	DA	37	DA	23
	Bn CO US	9	Bn CO US	24
	Total	180	Total	189

CONCLUSION - RECOMMENDATION

Although the conclusion and recommendation which follow are based on the analysis of careers of Infantry officers, it is considered they apply to officers of the other combat and support arms, as well.

Army professionalism can be improved in a meaningful way only by improving troop unit professionalism. Troop unit professionalism depends on the professionalism of their officer supervisors. These officer supervisors cannot become fully competent in troop jobs by spending only one-fourth to one-third of their mid-career service with troops--especially when averaging less than one year per job.

The OPMS, designed to improve officer professionalism, promises greater regard for concentrated assignment patterns. It lacks specificity regarding troop assignments, however, and continues to stress officer career development for the sake of officers rather than for the sake of soldiers and the Army. In any case, the OPMS "will require gradual change spanning several years . . ." and, therefore, offers no immediate solution to the problem of improving Army professionalism.²⁷

On the other hand, by modifying stabilization policies now for officers in troop duty, immediate improvement of

²⁷ OPMS Message, p. 3.

professionalism can be realized. By lengthening the time officer supervisors are exposed to troops, we can increase Army chances of achieving all volunteer status this fiscal year according to the President's timetable.

It is therefore recommended that, in addition to accomplishing the objective of GMS that pertains to concentrated assignment patterns, regulations/policies be revised now to stabilize officers in their jobs in divisions and comparable organizations for 24 to 36 months. As a general rule, such stabilization should take priority ahead of any other duty.

Only through assignment policies that provide for repeated troop tours of significant duration, will the Army prepare a cadre of professionally competent officers. Moreover, such assignment policies constitute our best tools for building a PREMIUM QUALITY All Volunteer Army. In such an Army we will not have to struggle to meet enlistment and reenlistment objectives. We will be able to pick and choose from among the best clamoring to get in.


GEORGE F. PARTEL
Colonel IFF

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